

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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NO. 37.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii.34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

MR. EDITOR,—

From being a believer in what is popularly denominated the Evangelical system, founded by John Calvin; and sometimes an advocate in its support, I at length, as I trust in the clear light of truth have been enabled to renounce all allegiance to a system abounding with dishonour to God, and with cruelty in its consequences to men. Having been made free; as the necessary result of this truth, I cannot suppress the desire of contributing my mite in prostration of my old errors, under which such multitudes are yet in cruel bondage. What I would at this time submit to the perusal of your readers, is, a few reflections upon the contest existing between Calvinism and the injunction laid upon the family of Noah. —After the previous ordination of holy matrimony, together with what the universal inclination and practice of men respecting this divine injunction, and ordination bespeak; God commanded the occupants of the Ark, after the flood had subsided, to “Increase and multiply and replenish the earth.”* Now, admitting this to be the language of inspiration, a point contested by none; and, granting also the truth of their doctrine who affirm that the Devil and all his works shall *not* be destroyed; but that a few only, in comparison of the whole race of man, will eventually attain the regions of immortal blessedness; the rest, that is, the great majority being irretrievably lost, because passed over in the covenant of redemption, or else actually reprobated, that is, doomed to endless wo and misery; and what a dreadful choice of conclusions, are we irresistably led to infer!

Can there be another, or any conclusion dissimilar to the following? Either that God could not have for-

seen the “end from the beginning,” or with all his perfection of foreknowledge, unfolding to his view the interminable torments, and inconceivable miseries, that would certainly fall upon seven eighths of his rational offsprings; he proceeded to give the command to “increase and multiply, and replenish the earth.” Marry and to be given in marriage; communicating to man at the same time, all the propensities requisite to ensure, ready obedience, and certain compliance; so that none of those torments might fail of execution, nor those miseries, of subjects to endure them!

What man would not be shocked, what nerve in all the human system would not tremble at the thought of the most distant approximation, to the admission of such conclusions? Who can be so indurated by infidelity, and crime as blasphemously to subscribe to either result, and yet the question recurs, can we from the nature of the promises with any kind of candour, evade one or the other, however appalling or diabolical in its tendency? I am aware, that it will be said by some, that “God’s ways, are not as our ways, neither his thoughts as our thoughts,” yet these objectors must be constrained to concede that the principles of charity, mercy and benevolence, nay, every thing that flows from these adornments of our nature, and which are enjoined upon us in scripture, are though imperfect, yet true exhibitions of his government; “who is good to all and whose tender mercies are over all his works,” and who “remembereth that we are but dust.” He who said when speaking to the multitude, “if ye being evil know how to give good gifts, how much more will your heavenly father,” &c. has not rendered that lovely and amiable for us to practice, which is opposed to his own eternal rules of action.

A good king, however sovereign, cannot violate towards his subjects, those laws, which tend to procure their

mutual welfare and happiness, as well, as to fix the stability of his kingdom; because that violation would immediately forfeit his claim to the character of goodness. These observations apply more forcibly, as well as more beautifully to a good father, to a wise, just and benificent parent.

What sentiments would we indulge towards an earthly sovereign, who should enjoin it upon his subjects to multiply their posterity; he having the power to extend blessings in full proportion to their consequent increase, so that all should be perfectly happy, or rather what would this posterity feel and exclaim were the king to tell them, that is, a greater part of them, in the issue, that because one of their ancestors, antecedently to his injunction, of ‘increase and multiply,’ had been a rebellious and treasonable subject in one instance, they now must be condemned to endure a series of degradation and misery beyond conception, a punishment equal to all the efforts of sovereign power and vengeance? Would they not with one mind infer, that either the force of the penalty somehow or other necessarily attached to the law, originally transgressed, could not have been known by the king, who is also the lawgiver, (a most contradictory supposition indeed but not more contradictory than true,) or if known in all its force and tendency, yet notwithstanding his royal pity, and tender intentions, his ability is not equal to the task of redeeming his confiding subjects, whose numbers have been extended in obedience to his sovereign mandate? or else what is worse than either, would they not conclude that he had purposely so constituted things, as to consummate the destruction of those, for whom as a good king, and benificent father of his people, every essential blessing was to be expected in rich provision,—these very titles of good and beneficent, flowing from their known applicability to his general system of government.

* Gen. ix. 1.

Believing that whatever is accredited with entire confidence by any person, especially in a religious sense, must on all occasions in which deliberation is consulted, influence the conduct of such person; I am induced to assert, notwithstanding the name of Calvinist be assumed, yet any individual of this sect, though proud of the denomination, upon bringing his conscience, and the essence of his creed, to the test of examination, must avow one of two things, namely, that he is radically heterodox; an unbeliever in Calvinism, or else absolutely destitute of every sentiment of parental sympathy and humanity.

These Mr. Editor, are broad and sweeping assertions, and it behoves me to make my position clear, and my doctrine understood. To effect this, I will suppose it to have been, and to be now, highly probable to the contemplation of those who have become parents, and to such as intend, or may be expected to fill up that honorable station in the world, that seven eighths of their children are to become as completely miserable as it might be in the power of the most relentless and sanguinary vengeance to make them. This being the fact, would not every feeling in accordance with the harmony of heaven, and with those precepts which heaven has inspired and given for human imitation, unite to act upon the principle that it were better to render the human species extinct, by a noncompliance with the spirit of the injunctions just quoted?

What parent, on beholding a great majority, or all of his children in consequence of an unavoidable, and existing state of human laws, led forth to be incarcerated in the most awful dungeon, amid all manner of serpents, or to expire on the block, or the gallows, could help reflecting most bitterly upon himself, as the instrument of their creation, when he had been previously without a doubt of the lamentable and intolerable afflicting result?

That must be a callous heart, a heart unallied to our common nature, that will respond and say, that such an awful concentration of circumstances, ought not to cause mankind to withstand the enticements, to forego all the endearing relations attendant upon family and conjugal alliances.

These suppositions being so oppo-

site, in relation to transitory things, and their legitimate application to the conceptions appertaining to the world to come so easy, that I conclude I have made good the truth of my assertion, which was that no person can be at the same time a determined Calvinist; without resigning his pretensions to parental sympathy and tenderness.

B.

To be continued.

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

To the Editor of the Universalist Magazine.

DEAR SIR.—You will greatly oblige a young but firm believer of God's impartial goodness towards mankind; to explain, through the medium of your useful paper, how I am to compare the following verses, viz. Gen. vi. 6, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." 2 Judges, part of the 18th verse, "for it repented the Lord because of their groanings." 2 Samuel xxiv, 16, "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil," &c. Psalm cv. 45, "And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." Jonah iii. 10, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them, and did it not." With Rom. xi. 29, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The above appears to me to be a contradiction; I shall feel very grateful for your explanation, which is requested in the belief, that you are willing at any time to place divine truth within the compass of common sense and reason. I am respectfully, your obt. servant.

E. H. R.

REPLY:—The scriptures sometimes speak of God according to his real character, and as acting consistently with his unchangeable purposes; in which cases they say; "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." Again, "The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man that

should repent." Also, speaking of God; "With whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." "Who is of one mind and none can turn him," &c. &c.

Again the scriptures speak of God's apparent character and conduct, as seen through certain mediums which represent him as acting the part of an enemy. Such scriptures should be carefully applied to the appearances of the divine providence, and not to the real character of the divine Being. Where we read, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart," we do well to allow the language to be highly figurative, designed to represent the great wickedness of man, and to correspond with that dispensation which swept the inhabitants of the earth away by a flood. We read in Jeremiah 18th as follows; "at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." By such scripture we may understand that the divine providence towards a people, as well as towards an individual will be according to the moral conduct observed by a people or an individual; not that the unchangeable Governor of the Universe *repents* by changing his mind, but only by varying his providence as the conduct of his creatures vary. In David's psalm of thanksgiving, recorded, 2 Samuel xxii. he says, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury." The same occurs in the 18th Psalm, a little varied in expression; "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." But

we cannot rationally suppose that the divine Being is ever *foward*, but that he *seems* so to foward man, who says, "I know thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown."

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, April 14, 1821.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

(Review of No. 2. Continued.)

Mr. Potts in prosecuting his enquiry is first led to consider what is punishment, and why does God punish sin. Mr. P's definition of divine punishment is very obscure, and is as follows ; "Divine punishment is an avenging of a crime or transgression committed against God's law. The crime is the reason of the punishment, because the very essence of sin consists in transgressing the law. God inflicts punishment, not merely because sin is injurious ; but, because sin is worthy of such an effect of his power." "Moral evil is the cause of penal evil, hence penal evil is the inflicting punishment for the transgression of law." (page 50. col. 1.)

Before we proceed further, we wish to notice the discrepancy in doctrine between Mr. Potts and his colleague Dr. Wylie.--The latter, in his essay on "the duration of future punishment," noticed in our review of the first number of the Magazine, declares that the sinner owes a debt to God, and that those who, according to Calvinism, are not included in Christ's purchase, are consigned to regions of woe, hereafter, to render by the eternity of their punishments, a personal expiation or satisfaction for their debt. But, Mr. P. tells us, that God punishes sin eternally, *not because* "he is an absolute sovereign injured, and to whom a debt is due" by the sinner, but merely because he is a judge who applies the law which inflicts the penalty to the transgressor. (page 50 col. 2.)—It is true when Mr. P. afterwards gives us the reason why sin is eternal, he thus in some degree coincides with Dr. Wylie, and directly contradicts himself. "Man in his pre-

sent state of depravity" he observes, "is unable to repair the breach of the law, or to pay the debt of perfect obedience ; the law makes an *eternal demand* against the guilty sinner, which is a proper reason for the eternity of punishment." (page 50 col. 2.) and that the punishment is not a *simple reparation* for sin, for "simple reparation is very different from punishment." (page 51 col. 1.)

Admitting the above assertions of Mr. P. to be true, how does the doctrine they teach, accord with that of a *vicarious atonement* ; or how, are any sinners, according to it, to be saved from the punishment which an inexorable law inflicts—a transgression once committed—a disobedient act once performed, considered as Mr. P. certainly wishes them to be, in simple reference to the acts themselves, can never be repaired, either by the individual, or by a substitute ;—nor can an eternal demand be ever paid, on the part of any sinner. To render this evident, suppose an individual were to disobey the laws of his country, by stealing ; and the simple act, without reference to the injury inflicted on him from whom the article was stolen, demanded the imprisonment for life, of the individual, unless he could, by some means or other, place himself in the situation he was, previously to his having stolen, and make himself not a thief in reference to this act he had committed ; or, in other words, pay the debt of perfect obedience to the law ; would it be possible for himself or a substitute, however exalted, to comply so as to escape even for a single moment from the penalty which otherwise the law must inflict on him.—Now, all mankind have incurred the penalty consequent upon a transgression of the law ; for all have transgressed it ; the law has an eternal demand upon all ; consequently, pursuing Mr. P's chain of reasoning, all must be eternally miserable, for until they can obliterate a demand which is eternal, and of course can never be discharged, they can never be saved from the penalty of the law, which our opponents tell us is eternal misery. But, after all, where is the scripture evidence to support these assertions of Mr. P.—There is none—for the scriptures instead of asserting that, for the transgression al-

ready committed, the law has an eternal demand on the sinner, expressly declare, on the contrary, that upon sincere repentance and reform of life, they will be completely forgiven—their sins will be blotted out, and remembered no more. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him---and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"—Isai. xlvi. 6.—"If the wicked will turn from his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful, and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die, all his transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him" Ezek. xviii. 21—2. "If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John i. 9. Now, until Mr. P. can do away the force of this testimony, we beg leave to reject, in toto, his doctrine on this subject, as stated in the essay before us.

It will not do for Mr. P. to say, as is taught by Calvinists, that Christ has performed perfect obedience on the part of the sinner, and, on that account absolves him from punishment, for if Mr. Potts' doctrine be true, this would be a violation of common sense—for the law does not demand says Mr. P. the punishment of the sinner as a reparation for the violation of the law, but, because the sinner has actually transgressed the law ; and as man never can repair the breach of the law already committed ; as he who has already disobeyed can never pay the debt of perfect obedience, therefore, the law has an eternal demand on the sinner, and he must of course be eternally miserable, and consequently, we say, if this be true, no payment can be made of this debt by another, so as to prevent the punishment being inflicted ; for if the debt be capable of being paid on the part of any sinner, the law had no eternal demand on that sinner, nor can God, the judge, ever apply the law to him ; so that in reference to him the law is never executed. But how did Christ pay this debt of perfect obedience for the sinner ? That he paid perfect obedience himself, we admit.—It is replied that he paid it on the part of the sinner by his guiltless life, his

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sufferings, and his agony on the cross. But after all this is performed, still it is true of the sinner that he has violated the law;—still it is true, *that* act of violation can never be done away, unless time past, or actions performed can be recalled, and the law still has a demand on the sinner, for as was very correctly observed by Dr. Wylie, in his essay, the law, or justice, knows of no compromise.

But supposing that it be said Christ's obedience was of such extent and magnitude, as to answer instead of the obedience of the sinner?—But what proof have we of this?—In what character did Christ perform this obedience to the law, for himself and the sinner also?—was it in his human character?—But, I ask, how it was possible for him, in that character to be more than obedient on his own behalf, or how it is possible for any human being to do more than fulfill the law? Every revealed will or command of God, in regard to those over whom he is ruler, is a line of duty binding in every respect, on those who are subjects of the law; beyond which it is as impossible for them to go, as it is to fall short of it, without transgressing it. Christ, in his human character, was, to all intents and purposes, subject to the law of God. He must have performed all that God commanded him to perform, or, he would have been less than obedient, neither could he have done more than God's will; consequently, he could not have done more than pay the perfect obedience which the law required of him as an individual, and on his own behalf.—But, it may probably be said, that Christ performed this perfect obedience for himself, and for the sinner, in his character of divinity. But, how can the pure, unerring, all-wise and perfect divinity, become subject to a law framed for the guidance of blind and fallible men: a law which in the very nature of things it would be impossible for divinity to transgress. What are the requirements of the law? Christ himself has told us they are perfect love to God and perfect love to our neighbour. But, who is the God whom *Divinity* is to love, or whom it was necessary to command him to love?—who is the neighbour of Deity?—Let us now examine the particular requirements of the law; they are to

worship the one God, Jehovah, and not to serve idols; not to profane the name of the most high; to keep holy ly the sabbath; to honour our parents; not to commit murder or to steal, &c. &c. Now, will any one person of sense, say, that the *divinity* can be placed in such a situation as that this law can possibly apply to him.—To say so, is at least the grossest absurdity—if it be not blasphemy!

But, I will admit for a moment that Christ in his life and sufferings paid the debt due by sinners, underwent the punishment incurred by sin. Why then, if this be so, is it contended that any will suffer eternal punishment?—In every sense that Christ suffered for any, he suffered for all. Isai. liii. 6. In every sense that he became the propitiation for one man's sin, he became so for the sins of all. 1 John ii. 1, 2.—as he is the ransom of any, he is the ransom for every one. 1 Tim. ii. 8. If he died for one, he died, we are assured, for all. Heb. ii. 9. So that to prove any will be lost, finally, we must say that God never intended them to be saved, in direct contradiction to Holy Writ, which says God will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 4.

Having finished the examination of an essay which, to say the most of it, is very superficial, and written without any attention to arrangement or perspicuity, we shall next beg leave to present a few hints on the nature and intent of Divine punishments, drawn from reason and revelation.

* * *

To be continued.

THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

"How complicate, how wonderful is man;
How passing wonder he, who made him such;
Who center'd in our make, such strange extremes
Of different natures, marvellously mix'd." Young.

AS Deity has stamp'd on man,
His nature, and his name;
There's no inferior power, which can
Eradicate the same.

If man is really so deprav'd,
As some have understood;
There's nothing in him to be sav'd;
Since nothing there is good.

For in that Book Jehovah gave,
I never yet could find;
That it was his design to save
The fleshly, carnal mind.

But in this plain revealed will,
He teaches me to know,
The "filthy must be filthy still,"
And to destruction go.*

Admitting, nineteen parts of man,
God would, as dross, refuse;
This would not prove that 'tis his plan,
The twentieth part to loose.

What tho' on earth, the heav'nly grain,
May grow with chaff, awhile;
God's power will separate, again,
The precious from the vile.

When thorns which grow in nature's field,
Are all consum'd with fire;
The soil will then the owner yield,
The fruit he would desire.

The heavenly part to God allied,
He never will destroy:
When in the fire of love 'tis try'd,—
'Tis pure without alloy.

But all the stubble, wood, and dross,
Are food for heavenly fire,
The earthly man, shall suffer loss,
And all his hopes expire.

This fire of love shall sin o'ercome,
Shall death and hell destroy;
And bring the soul in triumph home,
To dwell in realms of joy.

And since I have been made to know,
And feel, this conquering love;
It constitutes my heaven below,
And hope of heaven above. S. T.

* Perhaps it will be said, that the sentiment of *destruction*, or *annihilation*, is repugnant to the soundest principles of reason or philosophy. This is true when it is applied to any substance, or reality. But evil, as such, whether considered in its origin, progress, or final extinction, exists only in the motive or conception of finite creatures. Considering *evil*, therefore, on a larger scale, in connection with the *perfect plan* of Deity, it ceases to be evil, because it is always productive of a greater good. Hence the sacred writings inform us, that although the conduct of Joseph's brethren was "meant by them unto evil, yet God meant it unto good." The intelligent mind is therefore necessarily led to the above conclusions, or there is no possible way of avoiding that most absurd error, viz. that there is an infinite and consequently an eternal principle of evil existing in the universe, which sentiment leads to the destruction of those *attributes*, which constitute the perfect character of the Supreme and Eternal Jehovah; which are, *Infinite Love, Wisdom, and Power*.

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